

OCTOBER 2026

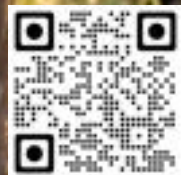
THE PAW[®]

MAGAZINE

SURVIVAL
WAS ONLY
THE
BEGINNING

Inside Lazarus's
remarkable journey

Lazarus - Rescued 2026



www.WPP.dog

THE PAW[®] MAGAZINE

VOL. 4 ISSUE 10

OCTOBER 2026

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TO END THE CYCLE OF ABUSE FOR
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ADVOCATE FOR THE VOICELESS—
AND WE FIGHT FOR SECOND
CHANCES WITH COURAGE,
COMPASSION,
AND UNWAVERING COMMITMENT.

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ELEVATING ANIMAL WELFARE WITH ACTION

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A WORD FROM THE FOUNDER...

October's issue of The PAW® is about what happens after the rescue. Saving a dog from danger matters, but it is only the first step. The days and months that follow ask something different of us: patience, observation, flexibility, and a willingness to see the individual dog beyond the circumstances that first brought them to our attention. Lazarus reminds us of that. His survival is extraordinary, but the part of his story that matters now is the life still taking shape in front of him.

That same idea runs through every second chance. Some dogs need time to heal. Some need the right home, the right training, or simply the freedom to become themselves. At Wounded Paw Project®, our responsibility is not to write the ending for them. It is to protect, advocate, and create the opportunity for a future that fits.

With gratitude and determination,
Ernesto P. Hernandez III
Founder of Wounded Paw Project®



WOUNDED PAW PROJECT®

CARTOBER

Turn an Old Ride Into New Possibilities

This October, your unwanted vehicle
can help support Wounded Paw Project®.



October is Cartober, and it is a good time to look at that unused vehicle in the driveway, garage, or yard a little differently. A car, truck, motorcycle, RV, or other eligible vehicle you no longer need may be able to support Wounded Paw Project® instead of continuing to sit unused. Vehicle donation can be a simple way to give an old vehicle a new purpose and help support the work ahead.

**CAR. TRUCK.
MOTORCYCLE. RV.**
**YOUR UNUSED VEHICLE
MAY STILL HAVE
SOMETHING TO GIVE.**



1.

DONATE

Start your vehicle
donation.



2.

SCHEDULE

Arrange vehicle
pickup.



3.

SUPPORT

Your donation helps support
Wounded Paw Project®.



**SCAN TO
DONATE**

Give your old ride a new purpose —
and help Wounded Paw Project®
continue to *Be The Voice For The Voiceless®*.

STILL



By the time Lazarus reached Virginia, the most dramatic part of his story had already happened.

He had survived a gunshot wound to the head. He had been found badly injured in a West Texas field. He had received veterinary care, spent months recovering with the family who first brought him to safety, and somehow made it through circumstances that could easily have ended very differently.

Those are the facts that make people stop when they first hear his name.

STANDING

But they are not necessarily the most interesting things about him now.

Because once a dog survives, another question begins to matter: **Who is he when survival is no longer the only thing being asked of him?**

For Lazarus, that question has taken him from a field outside Midland, Texas, to Wounded Paw Project® in Virginia — and toward a future that no one could have predicted when he was first discovered.

Before Anyone Knew His Name

Lupe and Veronica Rayos were driving outside Midland when they noticed a dog alone in a field. Something about him was clearly wrong.

They went to get a leash and returned. When Lupe was finally able to get the leash around the

dog, Lazarus was so weak that he collapsed. The couple lifted him into their truck and took him home.

There was no long-term plan at that point. There was barely a plan for the night.

Veronica cleaned him, and the family offered him water and chicken. They were not sure he would survive, but they could give him warmth, food, and a place where he would not be alone.

Veronica also posted about the injured dog on Nextdoor.

The next morning, that post reached someone the Rayos family had never met.

Gregg Noel saw the post while looking through the app and offered to get the dog to his veterinarian and cover the cost of treatment. What had begun with one family stopping beside a field widened almost immediately into something larger: strangers making individual decisions to help a dog who belonged to none

of them.

Veterinary evaluation later indicated that Lazarus had sustained a gunshot wound to the head several days before he was found. The injury left him blind in one eye and with hearing loss in one ear.

He spent about a week receiving veterinary care before returning to the Rayos home.

And then came the much slower part.

Recovery Rarely Looks Dramatic

Rescue stories often compress recovery into a sentence.

The dog was saved.

The dog healed.

The dog moved on.

Real life takes longer. When

Lazarus returned from veterinary care, he was still weak. Walking was difficult. For months, he barely made a sound. The family watched as small pieces of ordinary dog life began to return.

Strength came gradually. So did play.

Eventually there was barking — after months without it. Lazarus formed a close bond with one of the family's dogs. He became more active, more affectionate, and more engaged with the world around him.

None of those moments would have carried the urgency of the day he was found.

That does not make them less important.

In many ways, those ordinary milestones told a more useful story. Lazarus was no longer simply an injured dog who had survived. He was beginning to show the people around him what he liked, how he interacted, what interested him, and what kind of dog he might become with time.



Lazarus - Rescued 2026

He remained with the Rayos family for roughly six months.

By then, the problem was no longer how to keep Lazarus alive.

It was what should come next.

Finding the Right Next Step

Erin Dean became involved in the effort to find Lazarus a longer-term

future and began contacting organizations that work with rescued dogs. That search eventually reached Wounded Paw Project® and co-founder Ernesto P. Hernandez III.

For WPP, taking in a dog like Lazarus could not simply be about the power of his story.

A compelling history can bring attention to a dog. It cannot tell you what that dog should do next.



Lazarus - Rescued 2026

That requires a different kind of evaluation.

How does he respond to people?

How does he interact with other dogs?

What environments seem comfortable?

How does he handle unfamiliar situations?

What motivates him?

How does the loss of vision on one side and hearing on the other affect the way he navigates his surroundings?

How readily does he recover when something surprises him?

Those questions matter because Wounded Paw Project's work does not end when a dog is removed from danger.

Rescue is the beginning.

What follows is the work of understanding the individual dog well enough to determine what kind of future actually fits.

The Dog Has to Come Before the Story

Lazarus presents an unusual challenge.

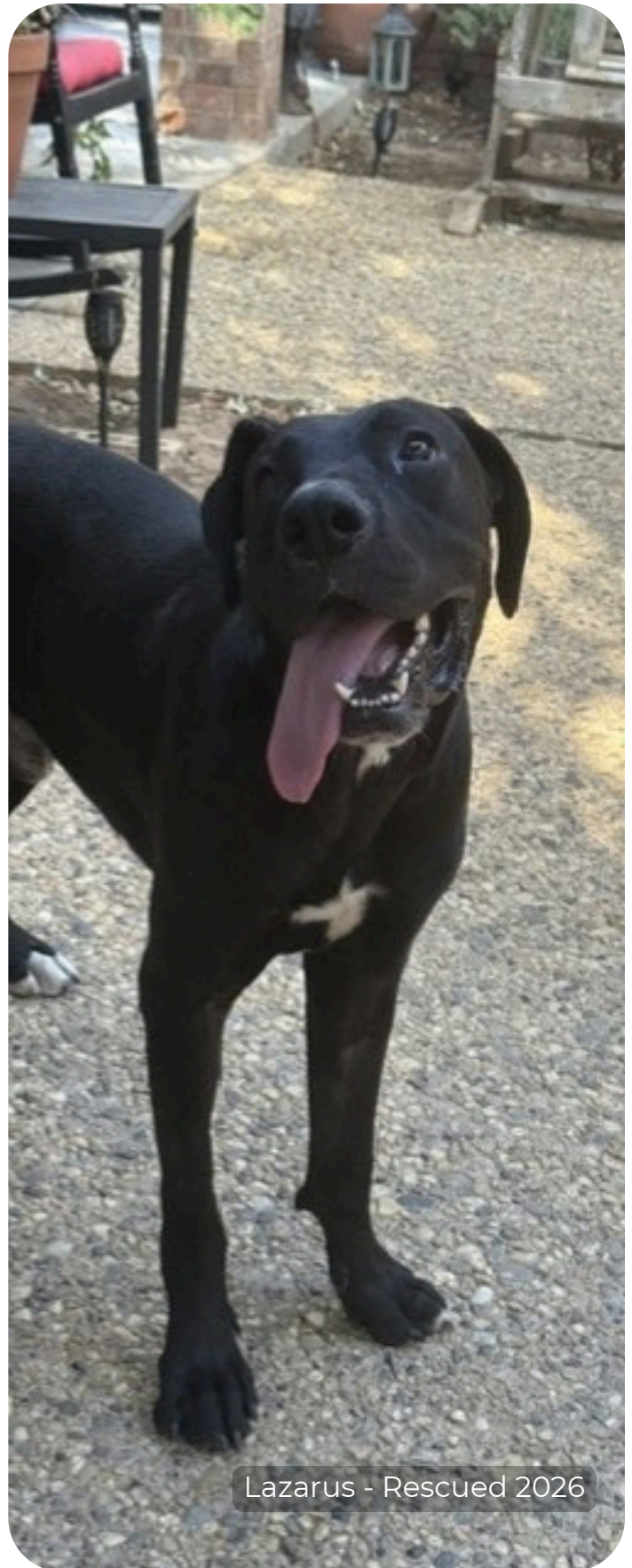
His history almost invites people to turn him into a symbol.

A dog survives an extraordinary act of violence. He recovers. He travels across the country. Then comes the possibility that he could one day support members of the military serving overseas.

It is an extraordinary arc.

It is also exactly the kind of story that requires restraint.

A future role has to suit Lazarus — not simply complete a satisfying narrative for everyone watching.



Lazarus - Rescued 2026

That principle is especially important as WPP begins preparing him under **Wagployment® On Your Six**, the organization's developing Military Unit Support Dog initiative.

The goal is not to turn Lazarus into a Military Working Dog. He is not being prepared for patrol, detection, protection, or combat work, nor is the concept centered on assigning him as an individual service dog to one person.

Instead, the developing idea is different: could the right dog live within a military-unit environment and provide the kind of everyday companionship, connection, and presence that dogs so naturally bring?

For Lazarus, one possible destination is Camp Humphreys in South Korea.

Possible matters.

Nothing about his future should be treated as inevitable simply because the story sounds good.

Training the Dog Who Is Actually There

The next phase is therefore less cinematic than the rescue that brought Lazarus here.

It involves observation.

Training.

Exposure to new environments.

Learning routines.

Watching how he responds.

Discovering what comes easily and what does not.

And adjusting accordingly.

WPP has a simple principle for that process:

The Lazarus Rule: No mission outranks his welfare.

If Lazarus enjoys the work, handles

the environment well, and demonstrates that the proposed role is appropriate for him, the path can continue.

If he does not, the path changes.

That is not failure.

In fact, it may be one of the clearest measures of responsible rescue work. A second chance should not come with an obligation to become something impressive.

It should come with the opportunity to become the dog best suited to the life ahead.

What We Still Have to Learn

There is a part of Lazarus's story that The PAW® cannot write yet.

That is intentional.



Lazarus - Rescued 2026

Since arriving with Wounded Paw Project®, Lazarus has begun showing the smaller details that say far more about him than his rescue story ever could. He is deeply affectionate and loves to cuddle, but he is also curious about the world around him. When something catches his attention, he often tilts his head to one side as if he is studying it, a habit that has quickly become one of his most recognizable quirks.

Those simple moments are beginning to reveal the dog behind the headlines: affectionate, inquisitive, and increasingly comfortable enough to show his personality.

Those details matter because the more time people spend talking about what happened to Lazarus, the easier it becomes to overlook the dog standing in front of them.

The injury explains part of his history. It does not tell us what makes him happy. It does not tell us what he will learn easily. It does not tell us what environments he

will enjoy. And it certainly does not tell us how the rest of his life will unfold.

Only Lazarus can begin answering those questions.

Still Standing

It would be easy to end this story with what Lazarus survived. But this story is really about what happens afterward.

A family in Texas gave an injured dog a place to spend the night. A stranger helped make veterinary care possible. Months of recovery followed. Other people became involved. Eventually, a path opened from West Texas to Virginia.

Now the pace changes.

The next chapter will not be measured by one extraordinary moment. It will be measured in quieter things: what Lazarus learns, what he enjoys, what challenges him, what kind of work suits him, and what kind of life allows him to thrive.

There is no need to decide the ending yet.

For a dog whose future once appeared to have been taken away entirely, having a future that is still unwritten is remarkable enough.

Lazarus survived.

Now he gets the chance to become something more than a survivor.

He gets to become Lazarus.



Lazarus - Rescued 2026

NEXT MONTH IN
THE PAW



WOUNDED PAW PROJECT®

Wagployment® On Your Six

Inside WPP's new Military Unit Support Dog pilot.

Next month, we'll take readers inside Wagployment® On Your Six, explore the reason behind the new Military Unit Support Dog initiative, and follow Lazarus as Wounded Paw Project® continues determining whether that future is the right one for him.



Lazarus - Rescued 2026

Rescued for a reason.
Trained for a mission.
Always on your six.

★

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MORE THAN THEIR WORST DAY

When a rescue dog enters Wounded Paw Project®, the first thing people often learn is what happened before the dog arrived. The

details can be difficult: neglect, abandonment, injury, time on a euthanasia list, or circumstances no dog should have endured. Those



Lazarus - Rescued 2026

stories matter. They explain why help was needed and why intervention mattered. But they are still only the beginning of the story.

It is easy for a dramatic past to become the shorthand people use for the dog himself. A dog becomes “the bait dog,” “the dog from

the landfill,” “the one who was shot,” or “the dog nobody wanted.” Those descriptions may explain an important chapter, but they can also crowd out everything that comes later: personality, preferences, relationships, habits, and the ordinary things that make one dog completely different

from another.

Wounded Paw Project® has seen that difference again and again. Diva and Luna came from a landfill. Jazmine survived hanging. Rosie was used as a bait dog. Lola was saved from a euthanasia list. Lazarus survived a gunshot wound to the head. Each dog has a

history that deserves to be acknowledged, but none of those histories can fully explain the dog who emerged afterward.

That distinction matters because behavior is not always a direct translation of the past. A dog who hesitates around a stranger may have had frightening



Diva - Rescued 2020

experiences, but he may also be tired, uncertain, physically uncomfortable, or simply uninterested in being touched. A dog who keeps his distance may need time, or he may simply prefer more space. The behavior is real. The reason behind it may take longer to understand.

Time is often what reveals the rest of the picture. A quiet dog may become playful. A dog who ignores toys may suddenly discover a favorite. One who initially watches from across the room may begin choosing to sit closer. Another may become more independent after learning the daily routine. These changes do not mean

the earlier observations were wrong. They mean the dog is becoming more comfortable and giving people more information.

The most useful clues are often ordinary ones. Where does the dog choose to sleep? Who does he seek out? What does she enjoy doing? What helps the dog settle? Does he like food rewards, toys, movement, affection, or simply being nearby? What happens when something unexpected occurs, and how quickly does the dog recover? Those details may never be part of the rescue story people first heard, but they often tell us much

more about the dog living in front of us now.

Training can reveal another layer. A dog who appears distracted in one environment may focus beautifully somewhere quieter. One dog may light up for food while another works for play or praise. Some dogs gain confidence through



repetition; others need more space and fewer distractions. The purpose is not to make every rescue dog fit the same mold. It is to learn what helps each individual dog feel safe, capable, and successful.

There is also a danger in expecting a dramatic recovery from a dog with a dramatic history. Survivors are often described as brave, grateful, forgiving, or resilient, as though overcoming hardship should produce a particular kind of personality. Real dogs are more complicated. A resilient dog can still be afraid. A loving dog can dislike being handled in certain ways. A social dog may not enjoy every

every dog or every person. Progress can be steady one week and uneven the next.

That is why WPP's work does not stop at saving a dog from a bad situation. The next responsibility is to understand the individual who came through it. Some dogs may thrive in active environments. Others may do best in quieter homes. Some may eventually take on a purposeful role, while others may simply need stability, affection, and a life where nothing more is expected of them.

A second chance should create room for that discovery. It should not require a dog to remain permanently

attached to the worst event in his past or to become an inspirational symbol because people want a tidy ending. The history should inform care, help guide decisions, and be respected for what it tells us. Then the dog should be allowed to keep changing.

That may be one of the most meaningful parts of rescue: eventually, the story becomes less about what happened to the dog and more about who the dog is becoming. The past may explain how a dog arrived at Wounded Paw Project®. It should never be allowed to decide every chapter that comes next.



SADIE

SAYS

RESCUED. SPOILED. ZERO REGRETS.

A second chance often comes with a few upgrades: softer beds, better snacks, extra attention, and the sudden realization that the couch is apparently included. Rescue dogs may arrive with complicated histories, but it usually doesn't take long for many of them to discover the comforts of home—and for us to happily encourage it.

STAYTM

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Your honor.
Your brothers.
Your family.
Your dog.
Your future.**

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**FOR THE ONES WHO
WOULD NEVER RECOVER
IF YOU LEFT.**





Lazarus - Rescued 2026



Lola - Rescued 2023

The first day home with a rescue dog is usually full of good intentions. There is a new bed waiting, bowls are ready, someone has probably bought too many toys, and family members

THE FIRST DAYS OF A SECOND CHANCE

are eager to begin. The dog, meanwhile, has just entered a place where almost everything is unfamiliar: new smells, new sounds, new people, new routines, and even a different door to go through when it is time to go outside. The first few days matter, but not always for the reasons people expect. This is not necessarily the time to figure out exactly what kind of dog you adopted. It is the time to begin

noticing. A newly arrived dog does not need to meet every neighbor, visit the pet store, or take a full tour of town. For many dogs, the most useful first days are surprisingly simple: a meal, a short walk, a comfortable place to sleep, a chance to sniff, and a few quiet interactions.

That simplicity gives you something valuable: a clearer look at the dog. Where does he choose to rest? Does he stay close to people or keep some distance? Does he eat right away or wait until the room is quiet? Does he investigate the house or settle in one spot? Does he sleep deeply or wake at every sound? These are not tests. They are the first clues to what helps him feel comfortable.

The key is to notice before deciding what a behavior means. If a new dog moves behind you when a stranger approaches, it may be tempting to say, "He is afraid of men." Maybe he is. But the more useful observation is that an unfamiliar person approached, came close, and the dog moved away. That gives you

something to watch again under different circumstances. A single moment can be meaningful, but a pattern tells you much more.

Small choices can also reveal a great deal. A rescue dog may have had very little control over the events leading up to a new home, so notice the decisions he can safely make for himself. Which bed does he choose? Does he want to lie beside you or across the room? Does he approach a visitor or prefer to watch? Is he interested in the toy you offered? Does he relax more easily in the yard, the living room, or a quieter part of the house? These ordinary preferences help you understand what makes life easier for that particular dog.

One of the easiest mistakes to make during the first week is trying too hard. Too many introductions, too many outings, too much attention, and too much excitement can quickly turn a well-intentioned welcome into sensory overload. Sometimes the best

thing to add is nothing. A quiet afternoon can be more useful than a busy one, and one successful introduction is better than several rushed encounters.

Rest deserves a place in the plan too. A dog who has recently been transported, handled, examined, and introduced to a new home is processing a great deal of information. Sleep and downtime are not empty spaces between activities; they are part of adjustment. Giving a dog a predictable place to rest without constant interruption can make the entire transition easier.

As the days pass, pay attention to the things that seem to help. For one dog, it may be food. For another, a toy, a sniffing walk, a quiet room, another calm dog, or a particular person. These details become useful later. The favorite treat may become a training reward, the quiet room may become a retreat when visitors arrive, and the preferred walking route may be where confidence starts to build.

Training can begin early without becoming a major project.

Responding to a name, checking in with you, walking together, settling on a bed, and coming when called from a short distance are all useful first steps. Keep sessions short and rewarding, and pay attention to what the dog tells you along the way. Training is not only about teaching the dog; it is also one of the ways you learn what motivates him and how he responds to new information.

The dog you meet on Day One may not look exactly like the dog you know a month later. A quiet dog may become playful. A dog who follows you everywhere may grow more independent as the home becomes familiar. A dog who ignores toys may suddenly discover a favorite and carry it from room to room. These changes do not mean you misunderstood the dog. They simply mean you are seeing more of him as he becomes comfortable enough to show it.

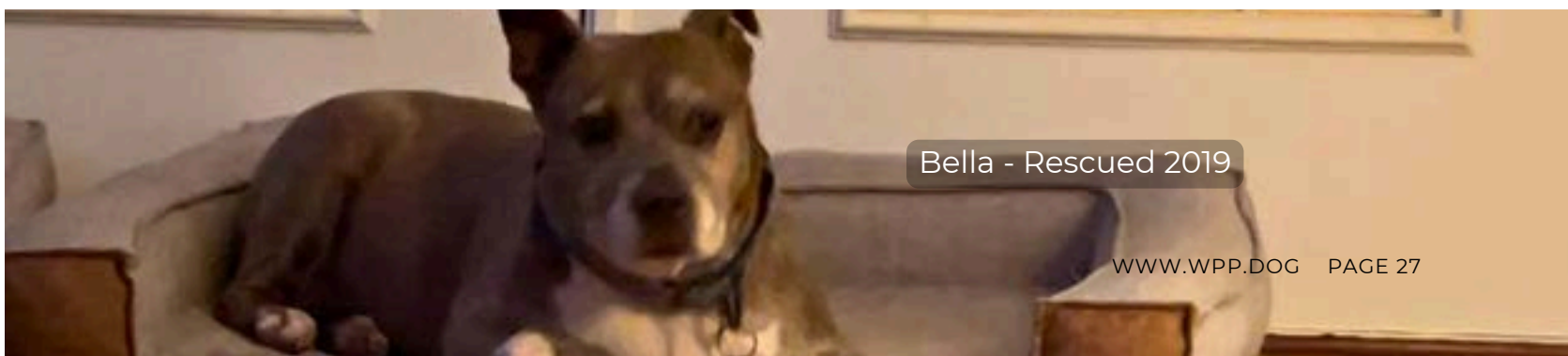


Elvis - Rescued 2022

A second chance is not a personality reveal that happens the moment a dog walks through the door. It is a beginning. Over time, you start to notice the small things: a favorite sleeping spot, a funny habit, a preference, a moment of confidence, a new relationship taking shape. The goal is not to solve the dog as quickly as possible. It is to give both of you enough time to get to know each other.



Daisy - Rescued 2024



Bella - Rescued 2019

BEYOND THE LABEL

What a Breed Name Can Tell Us —
and What It Cannot



Bella - Rescued 2019



Lola - Rescued 2023

A dog can be given a label in seconds. Someone looks at the shape of the head, the length of the coat, the body type, or the ears and decides what breed — or mix of breeds — seems most likely. In a shelter or rescue setting, that description may follow the dog onto kennel cards, adoption profiles, veterinary records, and social media. For some dogs, especially those described as “pit bull-type,” a few words can begin shaping expectations before anyone has spent

much time with the individual dog.

The difficulty is that appearance does not always tell us what we think it does. Research comparing shelter workers' visual assessments with DNA results found considerable disagreement when people attempted to identify pit bull-type dogs by sight alone. Some dogs with genetic heritage associated with those breeds were not identified that way at all, while other dogs without that heritage were labeled as pit bull-type based on appearance. In other words, the breed written on a kennel card may sometimes be an educated guess rather than a biological certainty.

That matters because labels carry expectations. A prospective adopter may read "Labrador mix" and imagine an outgoing

family dog, or see "pit bull mix" and arrive with an entirely different set of assumptions. Yet neither label can tell you whether the dog in front of you enjoys children, prefers quiet afternoons, becomes excited around other dogs, loves strangers, guards toys, sleeps through thunderstorms, or considers a tennis ball the greatest treasure on earth. Researchers have also found evidence that the label itself can influence how people perceive a dog. In one shelter study, dogs identified as pit bull-type were viewed less favorably when the breed label was present. At a shelter that later stopped displaying breed labels, adoption rates for pit bull-type dogs increased and their average length of stay decreased. The study did not suggest that breed is meaningless; rather, it showed

how strongly a label can influence human decision-making before an adopter gets to know the individual animal.

Breed can still provide useful context. Generations of selective breeding have influenced physical characteristics and

behavioral tendencies in dogs. Size, strength, coat type, activity needs, and some inherited traits may be relevant when deciding whether a dog fits a particular home. But tendencies are not guarantees. A breed description is one piece of information among many, not a substitute for observing temperament, health, history, training, environment, and behavior.

This becomes particularly important for dogs whose appearance places them under the broad “pit bull” umbrella. The term itself does not describe one single breed in everyday usage, and dogs with similar physical characteristics can have very different genetic backgrounds. More importantly for an adopter, dogs who look similar can behave very differently. The stocky dog who



appears intimidating in a photograph may spend most of the day looking for a lap. Another dog with the same general appearance may need more training, exercise, structure, or a particular kind of home. The picture alone cannot tell you which dog you are meeting.

A more useful approach is to replace assumptions with questions. How does this dog respond to new people? What has the foster family or shelter staff observed? How does the dog behave around other animals? What activities does the dog enjoy? What situations are difficult? How quickly does the dog recover when startled or excited? What kind of household seems most likely to help this particular dog succeed? Those answers are far more valuable than trying to predict an entire personality from a silhouette.

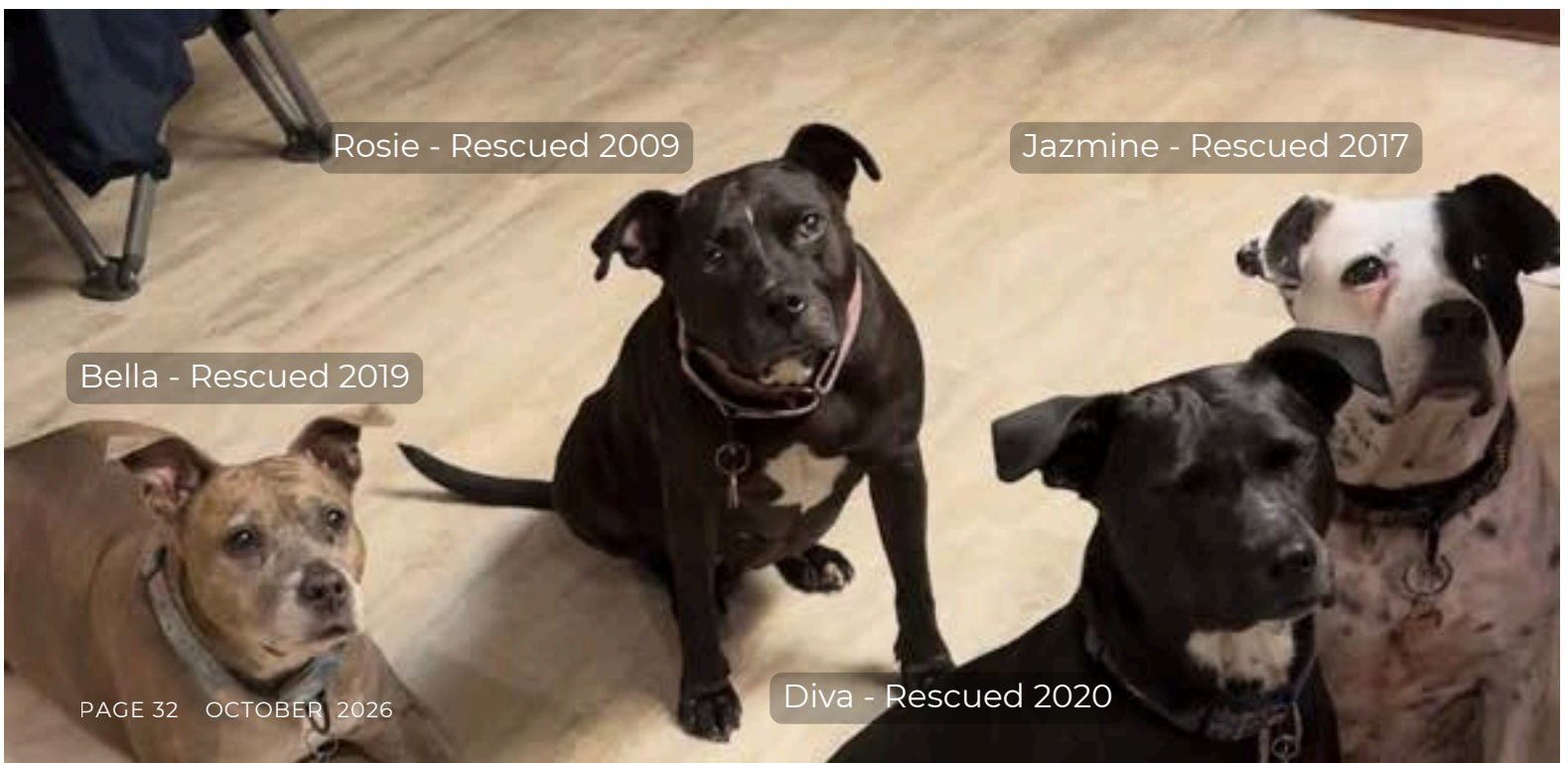
At Wounded Paw Project®, many dogs arrive with descriptions attached to them – breed labels, rescue histories, behavioral impressions, or simply the circumstances in which they were found. Those details can provide useful starting information, but the work of understanding a dog happens afterward. Observation, veterinary care, training, everyday interaction, and time begin filling in a much more complete picture.

October's focus on pit bull awareness offers an opportunity to reconsider how quickly we categorize dogs in the first place. Awareness does not require pretending that every dog is the same or that breed never matters. It asks something more practical: that we recognize the limits of a label and make decisions based on

the individual animal whenever possible.

The next time you encounter a dog whose breed label immediately creates an expectation – positive or negative – look again. Notice the dog before the category. Ask what is known and what has merely been assumed. A name on a kennel card may tell you something about how a dog looks or where someone believes his ancestry began. It cannot tell you the whole story of the dog standing in front of you.

Personality is discovered through time, observation, and relationship—not a label alone.



A LABEL CAN'T TELL YOU



Favorite toy



Comfort with strangers



Energy level



Training history



Individual personality



Best-fit home

Breed labels may shape expectations, but they never tell the whole story. The most important things about a dog are learned through time, observation, and everyday life. Look beyond the label. Get to know the individual dog in front of you.

**Notice the dog before
the category.**

Lola - Rescued 2023

Wounded Paw Project®

Be The Voice For The Voiceless®

OCTOBER IS ADOPT A SHELTER DOG MONTH

October's Adopt a Shelter Dog Month is a reminder that countless dogs are still waiting for homes, but choosing to adopt is about more than responding to a sad photograph or a difficult backstory. A rescue story can be powerful, but the best adoption decisions begin with the dog standing in front of you.



Daisy - Rescued 2008

Spend time getting to know the individual dog whenever possible. Ask the shelter or rescue what they have observed about personality, energy level, comfort around people and other dogs, house manners, medical needs, and favorite activities. A dog may behave very differently in a kennel than in a foster home or quiet room, so everyday observations can be especially useful.

It is just as important to think honestly about your own household. Consider your schedule, activity level, other pets, family members, travel habits, and how much training or ongoing care you can realistically provide. A thoughtful match is not less compassionate; it gives both the dog and the adopter a better chance at a lasting

relationship.

Once the dog comes home, resist the urge to decide immediately who you have adopted. The first few days are only a snapshot. As routines become familiar and the dog begins to settle, new preferences, habits, and personality traits often emerge.



Adoption is not about finding a perfect dog. It is about finding a dog whose needs and personality can fit into your life, then giving that relationship time to grow. The dog you first meet may only be the beginning of who you eventually come to know.

This October, celebrate

shelter dogs by looking beyond the label, the intake story, and the first impression. Ask questions, pay attention, and give the dog room to show you who they are. A second chance becomes something lasting when adoption is not just about bringing a dog home, but about building a life together.





LOCAL LOVE 

Meet Delilah

Delilah was found as a stray in South Carolina, emaciated and suffering from a badly infected broken leg. After her leg was amputated, Denise Hall offered to foster her over Christmas—and Delilah never left. She later faced heartworm disease and another surgery, yet remained sweet, trusting, and full of joy. **Her second chance became forever.**

“

“She has such a brave, sweet soul. I’m so proud to be her person.”

— Denise Hall



**Delilah
at a Glance**



Rescue:

Lab Rescue of the
Central Potomac



Found:

South Carolina



Forever Person:

Denise Hall

Diva - Rescued 2020



Looking Ahead to **VETERANS DAY**

A free guide worth sharing now — before November 11 arrives.

Veterans Day is still a few weeks away, but October is the right time to start thinking about how we will observe it. Rather than waiting until November to begin the conversation, The PAW® is highlighting a free resource now: the Veterans Day



The Veterans Day Teachers Resource Guide is free to download from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Use it now to help plan a classroom lesson, family conversation, Scout activity, or community observance before Veterans Day arrives.



SCAN TO DOWNLOAD

Teachers Resource Guide, produced by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs with the Veterans Day National Committee. The guide is designed to help younger generations understand the meaning of Veterans Day and the service of America's Veterans.

Despite its name, the guide is useful well beyond the classroom. Parents, Scout leaders, youth organizations, civic groups, and families can all use it to start conversations before November 11. The VA specifically encourages educators and organizations to share the resource as Veterans Day approaches so students can connect with Veterans and active-duty service members in meaningful ways.

The guide helps explain the history of Veterans Day, offers ideas for school and community programs, and gives readers ways to explore military service through activities, local history, and direct interaction with Veterans. The Veterans Day National Committee describes the guide as a way to build appreciation for what generations of U.S. Veterans have given to the nation and to help educators explore local Veteran histories.

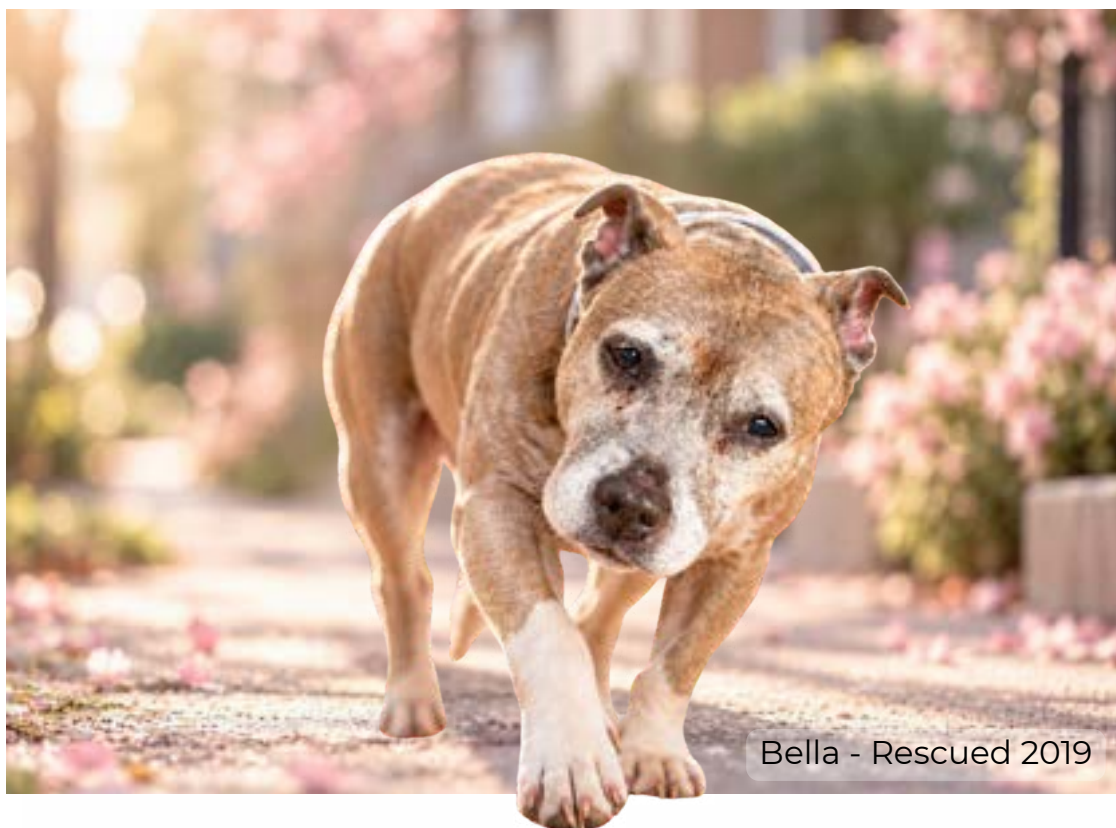
This year, Veterans Day will be observed on **November 11, 2026**, with the national ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery.

The 2026 observance also connects to America's 250th anniversary, giving families and educators an additional opportunity to place military service within a broader national story.

The advantage of sharing the guide in October is simple: it gives people time to use it. A teacher can plan a classroom activity. A Scout group can prepare a Veterans Day program. A family can learn about a relative's service. A community organization can invite a local Veteran to speak. The goal is not simply to recognize Veterans Day when it arrives, but to prepare for it with enough time to make the observance meaningful.

At Wounded Paw Project®, we believe honoring Veterans includes taking the time to understand their service, listen to their experiences, and help younger generations appreciate what November 11 represents. So this month, we encourage readers to download the guide, share it with someone who works with young people, and choose one way to begin the conversation now — before Veterans Day is here.

WHAT COMES AFTER RESCUE



The moment a dog is removed from danger can feel like the end of a rescue story. A door closes on whatever came before, the dog is safe, and everyone exhales. At Wounded Paw Project®, that moment matters deeply—but it is only the beginning. Once immediate needs are addressed, a different kind of work starts: learning who the dog is, what the dog needs, and what kind of future might allow that individual to thrive.

Some dogs arrive carrying visible evidence of what they have survived. Others bring histories that are incomplete, uncertain, or impossible to reconstruct. Either way, the first priority is not to rush toward an outcome. It is to stabilize the dog's world.

As the dog begins to settle, observation becomes just as important as intervention. How does the dog respond to people? Other dogs? New environments? Handling? Noise? Training? What helps the dog relax, and what seems difficult? Some of the most useful information comes from ordinary moments: choosing a favorite place to sleep, discovering a toy, seeking affection, walking comfortably on leash, or learning that a daily routine can be trusted.

Training then becomes less about making a dog fit a predetermined role and more about building communication, confidence, and useful everyday skills. Wounded Paw Project® uses the Wagployment® 360 framework, moving through decompression, training and socialization, purposeful placement, and ultimately healing and impact. The process recognizes that progress is not identical for every dog and that the right destination cannot be decided from a rescue story alone.

That idea—purposeful placement—is central to what happens next. A successful future may look very different from one dog to another. Some dogs may be ready for active homes and busy routines. Others may thrive with more predictability and quiet. Certain dogs may eventually be suited to a specialized role, while another dog's best outcome may simply be a stable home where





companionship, comfort, and consistency are enough.



There is no prize for choosing the most impressive future. The right placement is the one that fits the dog. Temperament, health, coping skills, preferences, environment, and the people involved all matter more than creating a dramatic ending to a dramatic beginning. A dog does not owe anyone an inspirational transformation because someone chose to rescue them.



That philosophy also means plans can change. A dog may need more time. Training may reveal strengths no one expected—or show that an imagined role is not appropriate after all. Redirecting a dog toward a different future is not failure. Sometimes the most responsible decision in rescue is recognizing that the original plan is no longer the best one.



This is where the Wounded Paw Project® principle of Protect, Advocate, Wagployment® comes to life. Protection creates safety. Advocacy asks people to see the individual rather than the label or history. Wagployment® looks ahead, searching for a future that gives the dog stability, purpose, and the opportunity to succeed on their own terms.

Every dog who reaches Wounded Paw Project® arrives with a past. The goal is not to erase it, and it is not to pretend that what happened no longer matters. The goal is to make sure the past does not become the only thing that matters. Rescue opens the door. The work that follows creates possibility—and gives each dog the chance for a second tail in life.



Daisy - Rescued 2008

From Rescue to Possibility

SIX QUESTIONS TO HELP KEEP THE INDIVIDUAL DOG AT THE CENTER.

Every dog's journey is different. These six checkpoints reflect Wounded Paw Project's approach and can help you think about what a dog may need at each stage from rescue to a future filled with possibility.

1 Stabilize

What does this dog need right now to feel safe?
Focus on immediate needs like veterinary care, rest, nutrition, security, and a predictable routine.

Safety comes first.

2 Observe

Who is this dog, beyond what they've been through?

Watch how the dog responds to people, other dogs, new environments, handling, noise, and everyday situations. Look for preferences, strengths, and challenges.

Listen for who they really are.

3 Build Skills

What can help this dog gain confidence and succeed?
Use training and socialization to build communication, coping skills, and everyday behaviors. Progress looks different for every dog.

Progress builds possibility.

4 Understand Fit

What future is the best fit for this dog?

Consider temperament, health, needs, environment, and the people involved. The right placement is the one that fits the dog, not a predetermined role or timeline.

Fit creates long term success.

5 Support

What will help this dog thrive in their next chapter?
Provide guidance, resources, and ongoing support during the transition and beyond. Every dog benefits from people who are willing to stay involved.

Support strengthens success.

6 Reassess

Does the plan still meet this dog's needs?
Be willing to adjust as new information emerges. Changing course when needed is not failure. It is part of responsible rescue and sanctuary.

Flexibility keeps the dog first.

The right future is the one that fits the dog.

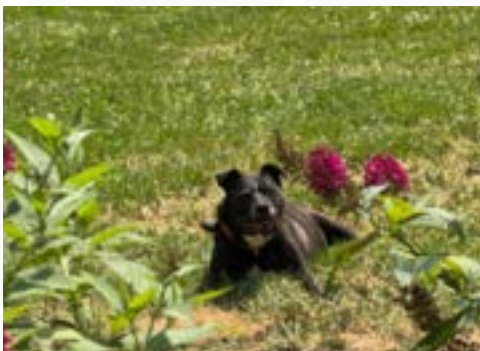
SECOND CHANCES, IN THEIR OWN WAY

Every dog's path is different. Every second chance is personal.

No two second chances look exactly alike. For some dogs, it means healing. For others, it means finding the right home, learning to trust again, or simply being given the time to become themselves.



Diva — Safety after survival.



Rosie — Trust after cruelty.



Lola — Life after the list.



Lazarus — Possibility after the unimaginable.

“Different
beginnings.
Brighter
tomorrows.”



Elvis — Comfort, routine, and home.

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and happy tails
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and their healing
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step of the way.

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WWW.WPP.DOG

***Our mission is stronger
because of partners like
you. Together, we are
creating safer futures for
animals in need.***



This is what a second chance looks like.

The ride that changes everything.



Kane didn't always know what freedom felt like.
He came to Wounded Paw Project from Washington, D.C.,
having survived a life no dog should know.
Today, what you see in the mirror isn't his past-it's his future.
Vehicle donations help make journeys like this possible.
They support rescue, rehabilitation, and the road forward
for dogs like Kane - and the people who walk beside them.
Turn your vehicle into a second chance.
woundedpawproject.org/vehicle-donations

From shelter to riding shotgun.

